

COLGATE & COMPANY JERSEY CITY PLANT: B-2  
(Colgate-Palmolive Company Jersey City Plant: B-2)  
53-55 York Street  
Jersey City  
Hudson County  
New Jersey

HAER No. NJ-71-E

HAER  
NJ  
9-JERC,  
18E-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Northeast Area Office  
National Park Service  
U.S. Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HAER  
NJ  
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# HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location: 53-55 York Street, Jersey City, Hudson County, New Jersey

Significance: Although one of the oldest structures on B Block in 1988, B-2 was not individually significant because of physical alterations and changes in function. It was significant as a component of the Colgate Jersey City plant, and as part of the oldest block at the plant.

Description: B-2 was a four-story-plus-basement, three-bay, brick bearing, 40-by-32-foot structure with utilitarian/Greek Revival elements, located on the north side of B Block between B-1 and B-3 (HAER Nos. NJ-71-D and NJ-71-F). A brownstone-rubble-walled, brick-floored basement, communicating with the basement of B-15 (HAER No. NJ-71-O) via an arched opening, supported varied-size timber beams, floor joists, floors and columns under a bituminous shed roof. The north end of an alley running through B Block occupied the easternmost bay of the first floor. The machine-made red brick facade was laid in stretcher bond with butter joints. Details on York Street included a cement-parged brownstone water table, a first story brownstone entablature with a plain frieze and coping for the cornice, and brownstone lintels and sills. The roofline entablature consisted of a brick architrave, plain frieze and dentillated brick cornice with a copper gutter. Access to B-2 was from the interior of the block, through a pedestrian door in the westernmost bay, or through a paired wooden batten gate leading to the alley. A variety of wooden double hung window sash fenestrated the structure and include 1/1, 2/2, 4/4, and 6/6 sash (NORTH ELEVATION; BASEMENT ARCHED OPENING TO NORTH; see HAER No. NJ-71, B BLOCK ALLEY TO NORTH, and HAER No. NJ-71-D, Figure 2).

In 1988, the interior of the structure was finished with wood floors (covered in places by steel plates), a variety of wood columns, and painted brick walls; a lone fluted cast-iron column supported a composite wood beam on the second floor. The first floor had an open floorplan in the eastern half with a brick fireplace in its east wall; the west half of the floor was partitioned into offices. Along the first floor west wall was a decorative Victorian-type wooden staircase with machine-turned balusters and a paneled exterior stringer. Above the

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\* Capitalized references are photographs included with this documentation, or with other documentation packages for HAER No. NJ-71 and associated structures.

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first floor, the stairway was devoid of detailing. The second through fourth floors were built over the alley and connected directly to B-3 (HAER No. NJ-71-F). Both the second and fourth floors had open plans; the north half of the third floor was partitioned into offices. There was a bricked-in fireplace on the second floor east wall (SECOND FLOOR TO EAST; CAST-IRON COLUMN (LEFT) AND FORMER FIREPLACE; SECOND FLOOR STAIRWAY TO NORTHWEST).

History: Colgate & Company built B-2 c1855-65 on property purchased by William Colgate in 1847, evidently replacing a much smaller one-story structure which stood at the north end of the alley. Exterior and alley walls may have been altered c1870-1905 to accommodate changes in adjacent buildings. Until c1875, B-2 was part of the Fancy Soap Factory and Delivery Department (former Building A), a multi-structure complex including all or part of B-15 (HAER No. NJ-71-O), with a steam engine, soap kettles, and other equipment in an undocumented arrangement. Building A faced Greene and York streets, and surrounded B-1 (HAER No. NJ-71-D) at the street corner, in an unusual plan which may reflect ownership of B-1 by jewelry manufacturer Brenton Crinnell until 1869. After the plant expanded east and south on later B Block in the 1870s and 1880s, B-2 became the plant offices, probably retaining this function until completion of the office building in 1910 (HAER No. NJ-71-A). The lower three floors were later used for soap production control offices and storage of packaging material, with the upper floor used for soap cutting and slabbing in conjunction with operations in adjacent B-15 (NJ-71-O). B-2 was demolished in 1989.

Sources:

Colgate-Palmolive Company has no pertinent historic plans or drawings of B-1. Documents listed below allow for inferences about early structure history.

Bromley, C.W., & Co.

1887 Atlas of Jersey City, N.J. Philadelphia.

Culver, I.B.

1866 Map of Jersey City. On file, New York Public Library.

Dripps, M.

1850 Map of Jersey City and Van Vorst Township, New Jersey. New York.

Factory Mutual Engineering Association - Factory Mutual System.

1962-79 Colgate-Palmolive Company. "Jersey City Plant." Serial No. 70516-B, Index 29368.

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Hopkins, G.M., & Co.

1873      Combined Atlas of the State of New Jersey and the County of  
Hudson. Philadelphia.

Hudson County Deed Books

1847      Vol. 9, p. 423.

Jersey City directory 1855-56, on file, Jersey City Public Library.

Washington Fire Insurance Company of New York

1872      Policy of Insurance No. 2288, May 15, 1872. Original in  
possession of Carter Litchfield, Kemblesville, PA.

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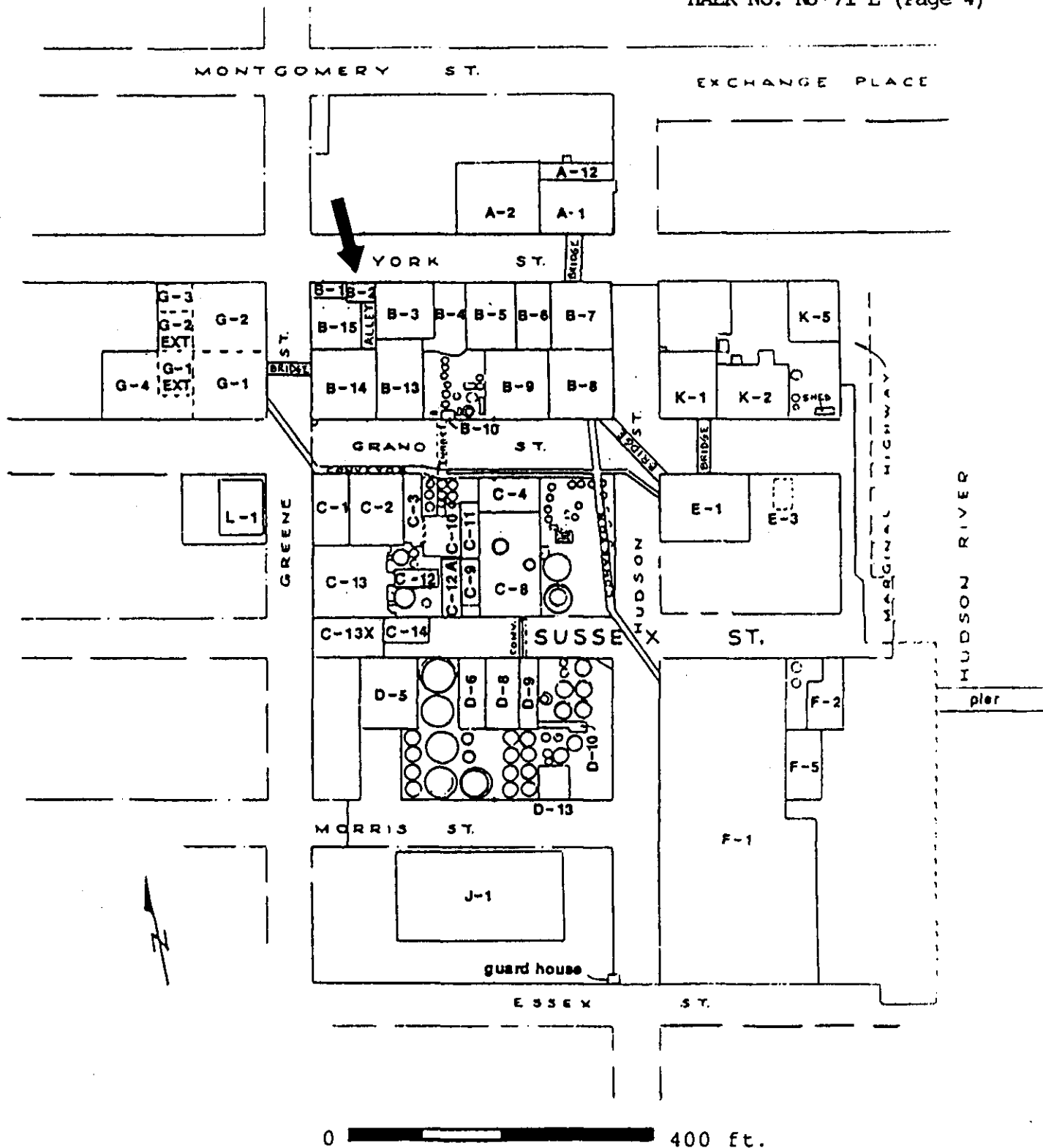


Figure 1. LOCATION OF B-2 AT COLGATE JERSEY CITY PLANT